



The Insider

www.senate.mi.gov/switalski

Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10

April 1, 2005

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a library near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See schedule for details.

Mickey's Letter Bag: On-line Dating

Dear Senator:

As a resident of your District, I am taking this opportunity to express my concerns over Senate Bill 0286. As my representative and voice in the State Senate, it is my hope that the Senate Bill 0286 is a concern to you as well, in whatever final form it may take as well.

On the heels of 9-11 and on the coat tails of George Bush, a host of civil liberties have been trampled on under the guise of national security. Balance that with Senate Bill 0286 under the guise of protecting those who use such internet dating services from potential predators, we again as a people lose a little more of our privacy and the liberties we now enjoy.

Recently, I signed my 13 year old son up for Little League Baseball, where I noted, parents volunteering for one of a dozen functions listed would be required to have a background check done. The question really becomes, where does it stop? If now dating services and Little League Baseball volunteers, what next? As a customer at a restaurant, is it too much to know who is really cooking my food? Is it too much to know who is driving the cab I am in or the pilot flying the plane or the backgrounds of fellow passengers?

This is a train that has left the station and the end run is one that we are all aware of, National ID Cards, linked to extensive and intrusive databases that will provide everybody for any reason, all the information we wanted to know about each other. Go to any grocery store, they know today more about your buying habits and life style choices than even you do. And before long with RFI, they can follow that trail of information even further. Where does it stop and who has that right to have that information about me, you, your parent, your child or your neighbor? Who is better served in the long run?

And I am surprised that given the current state-of-affairs, especially in the state of Michigan, that

Senator Cropsey and those that support his efforts, find Senate Bill 0286 worthy of the time and effort, given that the state of Michigan is 1 of 3 states nationally that has not met or exceeded its current fiscal budget projections as have 47 other states. Seems as though the people we are sending to state government have a difficult time prioritizing the states needs. With countless small manufacturing firms leaving the state in record numbers, especially on the west side of the state where Senator Cropsey's district is, you'd assume his time might be better spent addressing the jobs issue rather than a dating issue. Though, the whole issue of eroding personal liberties for the greater cause, plays well with his constituents on the west side of the state, and lends itself well as a smoke screen as jobs continue leave that part of the state.

Thank you Senator for taking the time to hear my thoughts on Senate Bill 0286. All the best.

Sincerely,

Jim McGreal
Clinton Township

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Dear Senator:

In your recent Insider, you ask for feedback on the online dating issue. While I do not know of any statistics that caused this matter to come up, I would have to say that I oppose even debating this bill. Michigan is facing a \$400 million dollar deficit, and the Governor wants higher ed to shoulder the weight of this debt. The unemployment rate in this state is so bad, I, along with many of my friends, have to leave the state to find a job after we graduate from college. These are the issues that I want my legislature to be thinking about, not about online dating. Online dating is something citizens choose to take part in, and I agree, there are some sites that do checks and some that do not, so let the consumer decide. Any cost to enforce this measure would be an absolute waste of the taxpayer dollars.

Thank you again for continuing to desire your constituents' feedback. As I have said before, I am proud to have you as a senator.

Tracy Kerchkof
Roseville

Mickey's Blog: Online Dating

Another front in the struggle between freedom and security arose in the Michigan Senate earlier this month.

For those that have been reading the papers lately, I don't mean lifting the state ban on the mandatory use of helmets for motorcycle riders (Senate Bill 297). For those of you keeping score, that bill passed in the Michigan Senate by a vote of 21-13 on March 17. And for the record, I was a no vote.

Rather, I am referring to Senate Bill 286, a bill that some may find quite troubling. Senate Bill 286 would require internet dating service providers to disclose prominently on their website, whether or not they conduct a criminal background check on users of the service.

In addition, a provider would have to establish a policy on what actions it would initiate as a result of a criminal background check.

Supporters of the bill contend that the Internet is a dangerous place and that with online dating services becoming more and more popular, it is necessary to provide users with a way to protect themselves.

I am sympathetic to such calls for protection, however, I believe that government should be careful when it treads into matters such as the personal dating habits of individuals. This legislation is fundamentally flawed and I would vote against the bill based on the way it is currently written.

Senate Bill 286 would provide users with a false sense of security. If a person provides a false identity, a background check would have no value to a user. In addition, a background check is not foolproof. Just because a person has no record, it does not make them a threat to a person's safety. How would this legislation address this issue?

Opponents of the legislation also counter that society does not require a background check when you meet someone at a park, at a coffee shop, at school or even at a wedding or church service. So why would it be required now? An even more troubling concept is if the government regulates on-line dating, what will the government regulate next?

Another issue is enforceability. How can one enforce the provisions of this legislation when the majority of on-line dating sites are not located in Michigan? In addition, Michigan would be the only state to mandate this requirement, and the legislation calls for penalties if a provider does not disclose that warning.

On a more fundamental level, I think a reasonable person would understand that there are inherent dangers of meeting people in person. Does the government need to provide a warning to an individual on how to run their dating lives and tell them they should be careful when meeting people on-line?

There are also privacy concerns with this legislation. Some people sign up for these dating services with the purpose of being anonymous in their dating. I believe it is ultimately up to the consumer to determine which dating service he or she wishes to sign up for and up to the service provider to determine how to run its business.

These are indeed important questions that require careful consideration by the Legislature. After considering them carefully, I find that this legislation has major gaps that are not addressed.

What do you think? Eliminating the Diesel Discount

To many people, the spring thaw signals the upcoming warmer weather. It also signals the start of the construction season, as road crews scramble to repair the damage that Mother Nature has left behind during the winter months.

The winter weather leaves many huge potholes for Michigan's drivers to dodge as they are driving to work or dropping their kids off at school. While there is no shortage of worthy and much needed road construction projects, there is a shortage of funding. For instance, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) has identified over \$30 billion worth of transportation projects over the next 25 years that are needed are not affordable.

Congress has been debating a transportation bill that will lead to an increase in road funding for Michigan, which currently receives about 90 cents for every dollar it sends to Washington. Even if an agreement is reached, an increase in federal funding will not be enough.

Additional solutions must be found. The American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that 38 percent of Michigan's roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Couple this with the need for new roads in the suburbs and developing regions, and one can see the magnitude of the problem.

While not the sole remedy, I have introduced legislation that would provide additional funding for Michigan's transportation needs by eliminating the so called diesel discount.

Michigan's drivers currently pay 19 cents a gallon in state fuel tax for unleaded gasoline. Drivers who fill up using diesel get away with paying only 15 cents a gallon in state fuel taxes.

My bills (Senate Bill 291 and 292) would make diesel drivers pay the same amount of state fuel tax as those who fill up their vehicles with unleaded gasoline. The proposal would raise about \$40 million to fund road projects. The bills are currently in the Senate Finance Committee where it awaits further consideration.

Opponents of the legislation argue that the elimination of the diesel discount is bad for business and would ultimately force the consumer to pick up the tab. I submit that Michigan's bad roads are one of the most significant impediments to economic investment in the state. At a time when Michigan leads the nation in the unemployment rate, I believe that businesses would be willing to pay a little bit more to insure that their products get to their destination smoothly, efficiently and timely.

Michigan has the highest truck weight limit in the country and that plays a role in the damage to our roads. Shouldn't truckers pay the same amount as you and I do to help maintain the roads that they use?

What do you think about my proposal to eliminate the diesel discount? I would like to hear from you on this matter and I will publish a few letters in the next issue of the *Insider E-Newsletter*.

Recent Developments on Credit Scoring Ban

The Insurance Institute of Michigan, an organization that represents numerous insurance companies in Michigan, filed a lawsuit last week challenging Governor Granholm's proposed administrative rule to prohibit the use of credit scoring when determining a policyholder's insurance premium. The lawsuit, which was widely expected by many, prevents the administrative rule from taking effect on July 1. Ultimately, it will be the courts who will decide the fate of credit scoring in Michigan.

Meanwhile, the Office of Financial and Insurance Services (OFIS) has posted a list of the insurance companies licensed to operate in Michigan that engage in the use of credit scoring when determining home and auto insurance premiums. The list can be found on the web at http://www.michigan.gov/cis/0,1607,7-154-10555_12902_15784-111965--,00.html.

Mickey's TV Insider Show

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

Sterling Heights

Every Saturday and Sunday at 12:30 p.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Utica

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Clinton Township

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Roseville

Every other Tuesday at 6:05 p.m.
(Comcast Channel 18)

*Please note that Sterling Heights/Utica/Clinton Township will show the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 5 and Wide Open West Channel 10. Clinton Township will air the TV Insider Show at various times during the last week of every month. Roseville can see the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 18.

Coffee Hours

*Please note that since the District Office is in Roseville, I do not have set coffee hours in Roseville. However, I encourage you to visit the Roseville office. We even have a coffee pot. Everyone is welcome to attend the coffee hours and discuss their issues and concerns.

April 4, May 2 7-9 p.m. Location: Sterling Heights Public Library (40255 Dodge Park) Sterling Heights	April 25 7-9 p.m. Location: Clinton-Macomb Public Library (35891 South Gratiot, north of 15 Mile) Clinton Township
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